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Anyone in the UK wishing to be added to the *CCNB Newsletter* mailing list should send their name and address to Beverley Fryer at the above address.

THE SELECTION OF DESIGNS FOR THE COINAGE

Graham Dyer

For the greater part of the present century United Kingdom coin designs have been obtained by competition, generally restricted to freelance artists and Royal Mint engravers but occasionally thrown open to the public as a whole.

To proceed by way of competition necessarily requires some mechanism for judging the entries and, wisely enough, the selection of the winning designs has been considered a task too sensitive to be left to Royal Mint officials acting on their own. It is, after all, inappropriate that a civil servant, even one as senior as the Deputy Master of the Mint, should act as an arbiter of public taste, though this is not of course to deny him and his colleagues a vital role in the assessment of the technical suitability of designs.

But the application of aesthetic judgement has, since 1922, rightly been in the hands of an independent committee, known by its full title as the Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations. The Committee examines the designs submitted in each competition for new United Kingdom coins and its recommendations are passed to the Master of the Mint in the person of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, by whom they are then forwarded for royal approval.

From the start the Committee has been a high-powered and influential body. Established with the blessing of George V, its members have always included a personal representative of the sovereign, and today new appointments are still made by Her Majesty the Queen on the recommendation of the Master of the Mint. The royal connection, indeed, could hardly be stronger, for His Royal Highness Prince Philip has been for more than

forty years the active and interested President of the Committee, guiding discussion as chairman and seldom missing a meeting.

The other members provide a necessary range of knowledge in a variety of specialist areas. At present, for instance, there are two practising sculptors and an expert in lettering; Garter Principal King of Arms ensures the accuracy of heraldic designs, while the presence of a former Director of Kew Gardens speaks for the Committee's need to have knowledge of fauna and flora. Numismatic interests are served by John Porteous and Christopher Challis, and also by Mark Jones, who brings with him an unrivalled knowledge of contemporary medals and medallists. Members with a more general background may also be appointed, but on the whole the practice has been to keep the Committee relatively small.

The Royal Mint itself is represented by the Deputy Master, and it also provides a Secretary and an Assistant Secretary who are required to organise the design competitions and to prepare the entries for submission to the Committee. Normally photographs at coin size will be circulated by post a few days before a meeting, allowing members to form a preliminary view before they see the drawings and plaster models at the meeting itself. These will bear no mark of identification and the anonymity of the artists is preserved until the end of a competition, designs being referred to simply by letter and number in order to guarantee impartiality and fairness.

With members being appointed to the Committee for staggered seven-year terms, a balance of continuity and change has been achieved. This, in turn, has helped to produce a Committee that, collectively, is catholic in its taste and that sees its duty as selecting what it considers best for the purpose, regardless of whether that design is traditional or radical in approach.

Graham Dyer is the Secretary to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee



Sir Hugh Casson, then a member of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, inspects drawings for the new Conspicuous Gallantry Cross before a meeting of the Committee at Buckingham Palace on 21 June 1994

COIN DESIGN IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Mark Jones

Discussion on this thorny subject has tended, in recent years, to focus on the role of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, which was indeed founded with the intention of remedying perceived defects in coin design in the early part of this century. I would argue though, that real understanding of the problems involved in the selection of coin designs requires a rather wider view.

It has first to be recognised that the monetary value and so the status of coins has been in steady decline through the twentieth century. The inevitable result has been that the acceptable cost per unit has declined, entailing the use of ever lower relief and cheaper alloys and so increasingly constricting the limits within which designers must work.

At the same time the special skills needed have become increasingly scarce. The evolution of twentieth century art has privileged concept over execution. As a result art schools since the Second World War have decreasingly emphasised technical competence or skill as a requirement for artistic success. Low relief modelling is a difficult process, slow to learn and hard to teach. It is one which hardly any art colleges now impart.

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee therefore faces a situation in which the number of artists competent to model coins is in long-term decline. The handful of experienced designers naturally feel that all available work should be directed to them. The Royal Mint Advisory Committee has taken a different view, aiming to increase the pool of talent available in the field by extending invitations to enter paid limited competitions to a variety of participants and by mounting open competitions.

The allure of open competitions is that they avoid the invidious process of selective invitation - anyone can enter - and that they sometime throw up new talent. Their very openness, though, deters many experienced and talented coin designers from taking part, for to do so involves a great deal of work and a high risk that it will go unrewarded. The entry for the £2 competition was large, but not distinguished. But the winning design, by

an artist who would never otherwise have broken into coin design, has so far been well received and the competition can be seen to have been both democratic and successful. The winning design was graphic, not sculptural. This highlights the central dilemma for those interested in this arcane if ancient art. There are very many more graphic designers than low relief sculptors. Given that coins are in ever lower relief should we simply accept that they are effectively two dimensional and regard coin design as a branch of graphic design? Or should we continue to nurture the subtly tactile skill needed to bridge the divide between the graphic and the plastic arts? Perhaps the Euro will decide.



The new £2 coin

FIFTY YEARS OF COIN DESIGN: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

John Porteous

The first coin of which I consciously examined the design was a newly minted penny of 1943. At the age of nine I had just become aware of dates and chronology, and these ideas seemed to be embodied for me, as in a moment of vision, in this bright piece of metal. A rather stiff and forbidding Britannia seemed a fitting symbol of a wartime Britain in which all public displays were patriotic rather than commercial.

The circulating coinage of Great Britain in 1943 was deeply traditional. Nearly twenty years later the great economist Friedrich Hayek in his lectures would take from his pocket a circulating coin, a bun penny of the 1860s, to illustrate the exceptional continuity and stability of the British monetary system. The pennies of Victoria and Edward VII were in common use. The debasement of silver coinage in 1920 had driven nearly all earlier silver coins out of circulation. Most silver coins, therefore, were of the issues of 1926 and of 1937, whose reverse designs, signed K.G. for Kruger Gray, were well constructed and learned heraldic designs in the tradition of W. St. John Hope and the Arts and Crafts Movement. The half-crowns, florins and shillings of these issues were really handsome coins. Kruger Gray took great delight in heraldic design and in that genre he has not been matched since.

Returning soldiers in 1944 and 1945 brought home coins from abroad - the Wehrmacht-grey zinc coins of occupied Europe, grim utilitarian pieces for the most part stripped of all but the most banal of national symbolism. I remember thinking how the sinister but undoubtedly smart eagle and swastika of the nickel-brass coinage of Nazi Germany seemed to have lost confidence and lowered its bedraggled wings as the war had proceeded: though that was probably not the intention of the designer.

I felt some excitement at the appearance of the first coins of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The youthful laureate bust by Mrs Gillick was an undoubted success, except in the technical sense; the relief was so low that the original coins gave the appearance of very weak striking, and when this was deepened by the mint engravers some of the delicacy of the original was lost. The designs for this coinage were chosen by a Royal Mint Advisory Committee chaired by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh who was appointed soon after the Queen's accession. His personal attachment to this early portrait is shown by its present continuance on Maundy money, though on regular coinage it was replaced in 1969. The reverses of the 1953 coins were not a great success, being in many instances rather coarser versions of Kruger Gray's designs. The exception was the twelve-sided nickel brass threepence, whose chunky angles were well set off by the grid pattern of a portcullis.

In 1968 I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. I was just too late to take part in any of the decisions over the design of the great decimalisation recoinage of 1969, save the last, the decision to bring in Britannia (displaced from the penny) as a device for the 50p. Perhaps my moment of vision as a nine-year-old in 1943 explained the enthusiastic support of the new Committee member for this proposal. Not that my influence was great. The Committee, under its royal President, was made up of serious heavyweights: Kenneth Clark whom nobody dared gainsay once he had pronounced a design good or bad; Anthony Wagner, the learned Garter King of Arms; Sir Francis Meynell, the typographer, a man of exquisite taste and courtesy; Humphrey Sutherland, the acknowledged aesthetic arbiter of the numismatic world; and, appointed a year or two later, John Betjeman who, with a well-timed and telling simile, could suddenly persuade the whole Committee that it either loved or hated a proposed design.

After decimalisation, the Committee's time was taken up mostly in the next few years with proposals for overseas coinage, typically of former colonies - birds and flowers, for which the newly-appointed Peter Scott's expertise was invaluable.

Commemorative issues were mercifully rarer then. I remember at the time of the Queen's silver wedding in 1972 how very limited was the invention of the various contestants. Indeed if there is one thing that nearly thirty years of the Mint Advisory Committee has taught me it is that invention is the prize to be sought above all. An interesting example of this arose in 1988 over the proposal to mint a £2 coin to commemorate the Bill of Rights. Nobody could think of how to embody the idea. I consulted Sir John Plumb, the historian of 18th century England. 'In itself the Bill of Rights meant nothing', he said. 'It is Parliament they want to commemorate and for that there are only three symbols: the portcullis which is an anachronism for 1689, the Speaker's chair and the mace. Try one of those!' I reported this conversation to the Royal Mint and in due course every single one of the submissions used either the mace or the Speaker's chair. No other idea was forthcoming.

For years the Committee was constrained by a doctrine propounded by Sir Anthony Wagner that any device on the coin of the realm must be, indeed become *ipso facto*, a royal badge. Once the first design was agreed for the £1 coin, the conventional but well

executed achievement of the Royal Arms, the Wagner doctrine bedevilled all our attempts to produce satisfactory designs for the £1 coins for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, a project that was made all the more difficult by the marketing department's insistence that those designs should make a 'set' and by the extreme difficulty of finding any recognisable symbol for Northern Ireland which did not offend the susceptibilities of one side or another. It is to be feared that in the end we chose the set of whichever designer came nearest to solving the problem of Northern Irish symbolism, even if the other designs were less good than the competition.

In recent years some of the constraints have fallen away. Some of the design successes have been commercial failures and vice versa. The symbolism of Great Britain's presidency of the European Union, an ingenious design of linked stars overlaid on a conference table, was so unpopular that the 50p coin of 1992 is the only rare piece produced by the Royal Mint. On the other hand the Picture Post pictorialism of the D-Day landings of the 1994 coin was a raging success - though deplored as a kind of numismatic Dinky Toy by some war veterans. Reaction to the highly original design for the new definitive £2 coin, chosen out of many hundreds of designs submitted in a public competition remains to be assessed. I think it a triumph, interestingly in tune with the traditions of quite early English coinage, but looking forward in spirit to the new millennium.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH COIN DESIGN

John W. Mills

My involvement with coin design came with an invitation from the Royal Mint to take part in the 1994 D Day commemorative fifty pence coin design competition. I was fortunate, although surprised, to win this competition and so was thrust into the business of producing more than just a smart drawing. I have always believed, however, that a good drawing is an essential tool in the initial presentation of ideas, and this is a practice I maintain. Drawing enables one to express thoughts fluently and to explore quickly an image and its alternatives, and a good drawing allows the viewer, client or judge, to gain a positive impression of what you have in mind. With a coin design the task is to express the coin in its finished form, not just in line, but with feeling for the nuances and character of the metal.

To make a relief sculpture is the most serious test of one's ability to draw. If you cannot accurately allude to three dimensions on two, you will not be able to project actual form from a flat surface, to make a convincing relief, effective from only one view, whether it be high, bas or low relief. I have therefore always made such sculptures, using this and portraiture as a personal measure of drawing skill, and I consider medals, and now coins, to be a serious part of the art of relief sculpture.

The need to make a plaster positive, with fine tolerances, from which reductions would be made, to be subsequently struck as a coin, was relatively new to me in 1994. I had used reduction machinery previously, but only in the production of larger medals, with high relief images. I knew the theory but this was my first real



Original drawing for the 1994 D-Day commemorative fifty pence, designed by John Mills

encounter with the requirements for coinage.

My consultations with Hubert Elsässer and Bob Elderton at the Royal Mint revealed to me some of the mysteries of coinage technology. Learning the dos and don'ts of the process enabled me to see the shortcomings of my original D-Day drawings. I had illustrated the drama of the event well enough, and explored alternative design composition, but had not considered, for instance, the effects of the plaster pattern on reducing needle, or the possibilities of a polished platform for a commemorative coin, or the outcome of the die strike, and the consequent influence these processes have on the spread of the image across the coin surface. Such technical matters should be kept in mind as you draw, not as a limiting factor but as an aid to design. Too close a consideration of the process however will be a hindrance to design freedom. Process led design thinking can lead to weak design. Knowing the rules, and learning those you can therefore break, gives one a greater sense of freedom when considering a given brief. Knowing your craft gives you liberty in your thinking, enabling you to accept the design challenge of almost any brief, no matter how clear or obscure it may be. The brief is the challenge.

So far three more of my designs have resulted in coins for the Royal Mint, and I find the whole matter quite fascinating and I hope it will continue.

BUILDING BRIDGES: PLANS FOR A EUROPEAN PAPER CURRENCY

Virginia Hewitt

During the 1990s, Britain has witnessed two major anniversaries in banking history. Founded in 1694 and 1695 respectively, the Bank of England and the Bank of Scotland set standards for the future development of banking across the world, and were responsible for some of the earliest banknotes in Europe: indeed, both banks issued new notes as part of their tercentenary celebrations. However, during the same period banks and banknote printers in Britain and elsewhere have also been preparing for the projected introduction of 'euro' banknotes for the single European currency - a curious and contradictory coincidence of national and international concerns.

The single currency is part of the plan for European economic and monetary union expressed in the Maastricht Treaty, which provides that euro notes should be in circulation by 1 January 2002 at the latest. The right to authorise this issue is vested exclusively in the European Central Bank, and public and parliamentary

political debate have naturally focussed on the principle of whether or not Britain should participate in the single currency area. But, except in exceptional circumstances of war and revolution, planning for a new note issue takes several years, so central banks have had to plan for either contingency.

In recent history, there have been few precedents for creating a common currency. With regard to coinage, the Latin and Scandinavian Monetary Unions of the later nineteenth century harmonised denominations and weight standards in the interests of trade, but each country retained minting rights and its own designs on its coins. For paper money, parallels might be found in the colonial issues authorised by European powers for their overseas empires, which sometimes carried the same designs for separate but neighbouring countries - in British West Africa or French Indochina, for instance. Of course, these resulted from policies based more on imposition than cooperation, but, for this very reason, it is an uncomfortable comparison, and the passionate lobbying now for maintaining sovereignty in our own currency may be seen as an ironic measure of Britain's changed status in the world economy.

The designs for euro notes were chosen through a process of consultation and competition: from February to September 1996, banknote printers nominated by EU central banks were invited to submit proposals on one or both of two stipulated themes, Ages and Styles of Europe, and abstract/modern design. A short-list from the submissions for each theme was then compiled by a jury of fourteen people drawn from different EU states, working in the fields of marketing, design or art history, and unattached to any of the central banks or printing works involved. The final decision was made by the Council of the European Monetary Institute, who considered all the draft designs in the light of the jury's advice, practical requirements for security printing, and the results of a consultation exercise with both professional cash handlers and members of the general public.

Given the Council's express wish to avoid national or gender bias, it is not surprising that the winning design is based not on portraits, but on architectural style in seven periods of European cultural history - one for each denomination. Images for the front of the notes centre on windows and gateways, symbolising openness and co-operation within the European Union, while the reverse designs depict bridges, intended as a metaphor for communication with the EU and between Europe and the rest of the world. Elements common to every note include the twelve stars of the European Union and a map of Europe: it has still to be decided whether all notes will carry the flag of the European Union on the back, or whether this space will be used for different national features.

On their first unveiling, at the Dublin European Summit in December 1996, and subsequently, the draft note designs have aroused controversy and complaint. Much of this may reflect underlying anxiety over the whole notion of a single currency now given visible form, and journalism's delight in glib condemnation. Recent excitement over the identification of real bridges or pictorial sources used for the bridges on the notes is a case in point. This may indeed appear to be inconsistent with the EMI's statement that the motifs are not based on actual examples and 'cannot be attributed to any

particular monument located in any single country', but it hardly adds to debate on the merits or otherwise of monetary union. The significance of these revelations relates rather to the process of designing notes, in which context the use of real bridges makes much sense. A conscientious artist must work from a reliable source to create a plausible subject, and specific origins need not preclude general relevance; the final stylised images do, as intended, represent architectural styles found in many parts of Europe. Much-publicised 'redesigning' of the notes will in fact consist of the modification which was already planned, to finalise the draft designs for production, and incorporate the most up-to-date security features.

The bridges will remain, following in a long and respectable tradition of architectural features in note design, ranging on British notes from the engraving of Temple Bar on notes of Child's bank in the early eighteenth century, to the Forth Road and Railway Bridges for the National Commercial Bank of Scotland in the 1960s. Yet these antecedents are also a reminder that the euro may signal an end to three hundred years of note issue by British banks. Viewed historically, this might be seen as the latest stage of a long-term trend in which English provincial banknotes were phased out in favour of the Bank of England's centralised control. That, of course, happened gradually and did not affect national authority over note issue; however it may also be significant that banks in Scotland and Northern Ireland retained the right of note issue and may do so again, even if Britain joins a single currency. The three note-issuing Scottish banks have made representation to the European Union that, under the terms of Maastricht, there is no monetary reason why they should not still be authorised to issue their own notes, which would be covered by the European Central Bank, as they are now backed by the Bank of England. The same principle could apply to Northern Ireland. Should this happen, the proud tradition of British note issue may yet continue.

EXHIBITIONS

THE BAMS STUDENT MEDAL PROJECT 1997

Now in its fourth year, The British Art Medal Society is to be congratulated for initiating this exhibition of contemporary art medals; promoting the medal as a form of sculpture and giving students the opportunity to experiment with this medium as a means of expressing their art. There was a positive response with students from six different art colleges producing medallic work, including The DZ school of Sculpture in Israel. It was obvious that a great deal of effort had gone into producing the medals from the initial concepts through to the final designs.

What made the exhibition so interesting was the wide variety of medals produced. All the students approached their medallic designs in a very personal way reflecting their own artistic and inner personalities. The medal is a medium that all artists can be involved in; graphic designers, sculptors, jewellers, glass makers etc. The beauty of this is that it brings together artistic ideas and talents into one sculptural form: the medal. A medal can encompass the whole spectrum of life as a window on our time, with the only restrictions being the size of the

medal and the imagination of the artist. In years to come, future generations will be able to look back at these medals as a time-capsule of that day.

As a sixth generation member of the family company, Thomas Fattorini Limited, gold and silversmiths, artist-craftsmen since 1827, makers of badges, medals and insignia; I am very pleased to be promoting this very important art form, to learn more about it, and to support it through sponsorship.

Thanks should be given to BAMS for organising this event and encouraging students to get involved in the complexities of designing a medal.

Tim Fattorini

Contemporary Medals, a BAMS exhibition, was shown at Plantation House, Fenchurch Street until 21 March 1997.

THE HSBC MONEY GALLERY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM
For years it has been a glaring omission that England's national museum seemed unable to find room for a permanent exhibition of the rich numismatic collections it housed. The Department of Coins and Medals therefore deserves congratulations on two counts - for finding the sponsorship to rectify this situation; and for making such splendid use of the resources thus acquired.

The gallery is housed in room 68, which is essentially a long corridor leading to the Greek and Roman Life room. This has obviously affected the layout, with the main displays being housed in large cases mounted along the side walls (six to each side). These are supplemented by seven freestanding cases that are used to cover, amongst other things, the manufacture of coins and banknotes from ancient Lydia to the present. The wall cases are arranged in three chronological groups - the first four (two to the right and two to the left) cover the period from 2500 B.C. to A.D. 600, the central four from A.D. 600 to 1700 and the further four from A.D. 1700 to the plastic cards of the present day. The effect is to create three 'virtual rooms' that could be labelled 'Ancient', 'Medieval' and 'Modern'.

Rather than attempt to give the kind of chronology-led account that is better suited to a book, the curators have wisely designed each case around a series of themes. Throughout they have deliberately used material from across the world and they have also tried to incorporate non-numismatic pieces that help to set the coins into context. For this they have been able to draw upon the collections of the other departments of the Museum, so the displays are dotted with cuneiform tablets, classical figurines and other items. For example, the case on *Money Used and Abused* includes sections entitled *What Were These Coins Worth?* and *The Mystique of Money* which contain respectively a Romano-British pottery beaker (displayed with a quadrans that would have filled it twice with beer) and ancient clay 'gold ingots' (the forerunners of today's Hell banknotes, themselves featured later in the gallery).

The coins and other items have been judiciously chosen and are well-served by the layout and lighting in the cases (both notoriously difficult to get right when displaying coins: only in one or two instances did I find it impossible to see particular pieces properly). I was also especially struck by the excellent use of illustrations, which elaborate points made in the main text. Some of these, such as *The Battle of the Money-Bags and Treasure*

Chests, an engraving after the elder Breughel, were completely new to me and deserve to be better known. The labels are also clear and sufficiently informative without being over-long.

Every visitor will have their favourite exhibits, but I particularly remember the Swedish copper plate-money 8 daler piece (all 15 kilos of it!), the similarly massive silver 50 reales coin of Philip IV of Spain and the case containing all 1,750 coins of the late 17th century Court of Chancery hoard.

This is an excellent gallery and it is impossible to do it justice in a brief review. (I certainly intend to steal display ideas quite shamelessly should the plans for a redisplay of Birmigham's own collections come to fruition!) Go and see it, and take your plastic with you to buy the equally excellent book. My only complaint is that there are no seats to save one's feet on what will, for the numismatist, inevitably be a long visit!

David Symons

FROM GOLD TO PAPER CURRENCY

The precise topic of the exhibition is indicated by its subtitle - the suspension of cash payment 1797-1821. It looks at the period during and after the Napoleonic wars when the Bank of England suspended the payment of its notes in gold. The 'restriction period' was introduced in 1797 as temporary expedient, to cope with the loss of confidence in paper prompted by the combination of an abortive French invasion in Wales and the low levels of the Bank's bullion reserves. Though temporary in origin, the suspension lasted 24 years until the Gold Standard was formally established in May 1821.

The exhibition brings together a wide range of material - as well as notes and coins there is a wealth of contemporary cartoons, not just the well known ones by Gillray and Cruikshank. There are also proclamations and documents, as well as a number of pamphlets and contemporary 'economic' writings, such as those by David Ricardo, which put the period in the much broader context of the development of the intellectual debate of the 18th and 19th centuries about the nature and behaviour of money.

Two themes perhaps stand out as being the most interesting raised by the exhibition. One is the increase in forgery, prompted by the issue of notes in small denominations like £1 or £2 to replace coins. A populace unused to this degree of the use of paper money rapidly fell victim to the efforts of forgers, leading both to the 'frequent [some 300] and useless inflictions of the barbarous punishment of Death', but also the search for the 'inimitable' note.

The second theme is the impact of the 'restriction' period on monetary and economic thought, brought about by, for example, reflections on the significant fluctuations in the exchange rate and the debate on the causes of price rises. We can see here an early example of an awareness of what we now call 'monetarism', the same debate as was familiar a decade ago about the effect of government spending (printing money) on inflation.

As often with exhibitions on monetary themes, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Go along and have a think.

Andrew Burnett

Bank of England Museum, Bartholomew Lane, London EC2. 27 February - 30 September 1997.

NEWS

NEW COIN ROOM IN EDINBURGH

A new coin room has been created for the National Museums of Scotland, within the Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. For the first time since the old Royal Scottish Museum and National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland were amalgamated as part of the National Museums of Scotland in 1985, the numismatic collections from both museums are now housed within one room, which also contains a curator's office and facilities for visiting scholars.

In the past it has been difficult for visitors to study items from the collections, and many numismatists may be unaware of the scale and range of the Museum's holdings. Their greatest strength lies, not surprisingly, in Scottish material - coins, medals, trade tokens and communion tokens - but the estimated 55,000 items also include substantial collections of Roman Republican and Imperial coins and mediaeval English and continental coins (many from Scottish hoards), as well as representative collections of Ancient Greek, Oriental and modern world coins, English and Irish trade tokens and British and foreign medals and smaller numbers of items from various other series.

Anyone wishing to obtain further information about the collections, or to arrange a study visit, should contact Nicholas Holmes, Curator (Numismatics), at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF (0131 247 4061).

BRITISH MUSEUM, DEPARTMENT OF COINS AND MEDALS: OPENING HOURS

From the beginning of February the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum has no longer been open to the public on every Saturday morning. This decision has been taken with regret, in the light of both the Museum's financial position and of the very light use that has been made of the identification service and the Students' Room on Saturdays over the last two years. For the rest of this year the Department will be open approximately one Saturday each month (see below for a list). The position will be reviewed at the end of the year; if demand increases then the service might be re-instated, but if it declines then Saturday opening may then cease altogether.

Saturday opening in 1997:

26 April 1997

7 June 1997

12 July 1997

27 September 1997

1 November 1997

6 December 1997.

CCNB MEETING: TREASURE ACT CODE OF PRACTICE

A well-attended open meeting was held on 1 February 1997 at the Cumberland Coin Fair to discuss the draft Code of Practice being drawn up under the new Treasure Act.

The panel consisted of Philip Rueff, Roger Bland (Department of National Heritage) and John Mussell (Editor, Coin News). Mr Rueff presented the new Act from the legal point of view. Dr Bland gave an overview of the Code and discussed some of the points arising from it. Mr Mussell welcomed the Code of Practice as

building a bridge between museums, archaeologists and detector users.

The meeting was then opened to the floor and many different speakers expressed views or asked questions. The speakers included detector users, museum curators, auctioneers, dealers and collectors. Matters raised included the definition of associated material, the level of rewards, the importance of recording finds, and reporting procedures.

The meeting was conducted in a constructive mood, even if not all participants agreed with everything. Thanks go to Philip Rueff for chairing it, and to Frances Simmons for allowing the meeting to be held at the Fair.

RNS NEWS

The Shamma prize for works in English on Islamic numismatics is shared this year by Mehdi Malek for two articles on the Dayubid Ispahbads of Tabaristan, and Robert Tye for his catalogue of jitals.

The Lhotka prize has been awarded to Chris Howgego for *Ancient Coins from History*

LECTURES, SEMINARS, COLLOQUIA AND CONFERENCES

April

- 1 *HSBC Money Gallery: Princely Gifts: coins for presentation and display*
Barrie Cook
British Museum Lecture Theatre

- 11-13 BANS
Annual Congress
Culford School, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk
Speakers include:
Dr Robin Eaglen
Virginia Hewitt
Glen K.L. Cousins
Graham Dyer
John Sadler
Robin Baker
Dr Roger Bland
Contact: David Palmer, tel. 01842 812569

- 15 RNS
The coinage of John Comnenus-Ducas of Thessalonica, 1237-1244
Simon Bendall

- 22 BNS
A spark may yet remain: the medals of the Royal Humane Society
Craig Barclay

May

- 20 RNS
Kaniska again - Numismatic insights into dating Ancient Indian kings
Joe Cribb
- 27 BNS
Folklore and Treasure Trove
Paul Robinson

June

- 17 RNS
Annual General Meeting and Presidential Address
Viking Age Numismatics 3. Islamic dirhams in the Northern Lands
Michael Metcalf

- 24 BNS
The silver exchange of 1817
Kevin Clancy

July

- 5 BNS
Mints and Coinage in Winchester and Wessex
A special one-day meeting at the Guildhall, Winchester
- 11-13 BAMS
Annual weekend conference
York
Contact: Philip Attwood, tel. 0171-323 8260

September

- 12-14 Token Congress
Nottingham
Contact: Alan Judd, PO Box 19, Beeston, Notts, NG9 2NE
- 19-21 BANS
Weekend Lecture Course
Hatfield College, Durham University
Contact: Joe Bispham, tel. 01702 230950
- 23 BNS
The Linecar Lecture
Peasants and coins: the uses of money in the later Middle Ages
Christopher Dyer

October

- 28 BNS
Lost money: interpreting Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman coin finds
Mark Blackburn and Jens Christian Moesgaard

Contacts:

British Art Medal Society (BAMS)

Mr P. Attwood, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London WC1B 3DG, tel. 0171-323 8260. Unless otherwise stated all meetings held at 5.30pm, Cutlers' Hall, Warwick Lane, London EC4.

British Association of Numismatic Societies (BANS)

Mr P H Mernick, c/o Bush, Boake, Allen Ltd, Blackhorse Lane, London, E17 5QP, tel. 0181-523 6531.

British Numismatic Society (BNS)

Dr D Bateson, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QQ, tel. 0141-330 4289. Unless otherwise stated all meetings held at 6.00pm, Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London WC1.

Oriental Numismatic Society (ONS)

Mr J Cribb, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London WC1B 3DG, tel. 0171-323 8585.

Royal Numismatic Society (RNS)

Ms V Hewitt, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London WC1B 3DG, tel. 0171-323 8228. Unless otherwise stated all meetings held at 5.30pm, Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London WC1.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

- 10 September 1996 - 18 May 1997 London
The Rev. Ernest S. Box: an Englishman's collection of Chinese coins
Gallery 69a, British Museum
- 13 November 1996 - 26 April 1997 Glasgow
Medallic Bard: medals of Robert Burns
Hunterian Museum
- 27 February - 30 September 1997 London
From Gold to Paper Currency: The suspension of cash payments 1797 - 1821
The Bank of England Museum, Bartholomew Lane, London

29 April - 6 July 1997 Cambridge
On the Edge: medals by Jane McAdam-Freud
 Fitzwilliam Museum

30 April - 15 June 1997 Llantrisant
Marking the Moment: medals today
 A BAMS exhibition, Model House

3 May - 29 June 1997 Edinburgh
Beauty and the Banknote
 A British Museum travelling exhibition
 The Royal Museum of Scotland

20 May - 17 August 1997 London
Coin jewellery
 Gallery 69a, British Museum

2 June - 7 September 1997 York
Modern Medals '95/'96/'97
 Yorkshire Museum

AUCTIONS AND FAIRS

April

13 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

15 *Croydon Coin Auctions*
 Contact: Linda/Graeme Monk, tel. 0181 656 4583

16 Banknotes
 Auction: Spink in association with Christie's

18-19 *Coinex Wales*
 Cardiff City Hall, Cardiff
 Contact: BNTA Secretary, Mrs Carol Carter, tel. 0181 398 4290

19 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London
 Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

23 Russian Coins and Medals
 Auction: Baldwin's

24-25 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Sotheby's

May

10 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London
 Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

11 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

27 *Croydon Coin Auctions*
 Contact: Linda/Graeme Monk, tel. 0181 656 4583

27-28 Ancient, British and world coins, medals, tokens, banknotes
 Auction: Baldwin's

30 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Sotheby's

June

5 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Bonhams

7 *The London Coin Fair*
 Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1
 Contact: Frances Simmons, tel. 0181 989 8097

8 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

21 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London

Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

25 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Glendining's

July

8 Commemorative Medals
 Auction: Sotheby's

9 English and Foreign coins and commemorative medals
 Auction: Spink in association with Christie's

13 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

19 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London
 Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

22 *Croydon Coin Auctions*
 Contact: Linda/Graeme Monk, tel. 0181 656 4583

August

10 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

16 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London
 Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

September

5 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Bonhams

6 *The London Coin Fair*
 Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1
 Contact: Frances Simmons, tel. 0181 989 8097

14 *Midland Stamp & Coin Fairs*
 National Motor-Cycle Museum, Bickenhill, Birmingham
 Contact: tel. 01203 716160

20 *Coin Fair*
 Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London
 Contact: Davidson Monk Fairs, tel. 0181 651 3891

October

1 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Glendining's

2 Banknotes
 Auction: Spink in association with Christie's

2-3 Coins and Medals
 Auction: Sotheby's

8-9 Ancient, English and Foreign coins and commemorative medals
 Auction: Spink in association with Christie's

10-11 *Coinex*
 London Marriott Hotel, Grosvenor Square, London
 Contact: BNTA Secretary, Mrs Carol Carter, tel. 0181 398 4290

Unless otherwise stated all auctions held at addresses listed.
 Dates may be subject to alteration.

Baldwin's: Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, London.
 Bonhams: Montpelier Street, Knightsbridge, London, SW7 1HH.
 Glendining's: 101 New Bond Street, London W1Y 9LG.
 Christie's/Spink & Son: 5-7 King Street, London, SW1Y 6QS.
 Sotheby's: 34 New Bond Street, London, W1A 2AA.

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